

VZCZCXR07839
OO RUEHCHI RUEHDT RUEHHM RUEHNH
DE RUEHGO #1056 2971024

ZNY CCCCC ZZH
O 241024Z OCT 07
FM AMEMBASSY RANGOON

TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 6738
INFO RUCNASE/ASEAN MEMBER COLLECTIVE
RUEHGG/UN SECURITY COUNCIL COLLECTIVE
RUEHBY/AMEMBASSY CANBERRA 0634
RUEHNE/AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI 4172
RUEHUL/AMEMBASSY SEOUL 7724
RUEHKO/AMEMBASSY TOKYO 5284
RUEHCHI/AMCONSUL CHIANG MAI 1158
RHHMUNA/CDR USPACOM HONOLULU HI
RHEHNSC/NSC WASHDC
RUCNDT/USMISSION USUN NEW YORK 1070
RUEKJCS/SECDEF WASHDC
RUEKJCS/JOINT STAFF WASHDC

C O N F I D E N T I A L RANGOON 001056

SIPDIS

SIPDIS

DEPT FOR EAP/MLS, DRL, AND IO
PACOM FOR FPA

E.O. 12958: DECL: 10/23/2017

TAGS: PGOV PREL PHUM BM

SUBJECT: FEMINIST WRITERS' GROUP EXPRESSES OPTIMISM FOR
BURMA

Classified By: P/E Chief Leslie Hayden for Reasons 1.4 (b) & (d)

¶1. (C) Summary. Writers for a local feminist magazine expressed optimism for the future of democracy in Burma. They noted that the demonstrations in September differed from the 1988 demonstrations because this time the international community was watching. They also felt that a new generation had inherited the democracy movement in Burma allowing more space for fresh and creative ideas in the future. End SumQry.

¶2. (C) On October 23 Poloff met with a group of six feminist writers led by Dr. Anna May Say Pa. The group writes for a newly founded feminist magazine in Rangoon, funded by the Embassy's small grants program. Dr. Anna noted that the magazine does not represent feminism as understood in the West. She emphasized that her group aims to express all views, conservative and liberal, and to discuss them openly to explore opportunities for women of all religions and walks of life in Burma. She said that the next issue of the magazine will even publish an article by a man who holds more traditional and conservative views of a woman's role in society. The group also sponsors a class that teaches local women to use computers, a skill that many are afraid of learning, she said.

¶3. (C) When asked what they think lies ahead for Burma, the group appeared unified in their optimism. The demonstrations in September differed from the ones in 1988 because this time the entire world was watching. They explained that the attention the events received from the international community gave them hope, because it restricts the military regime. Countries that care about what happens in Burma will pressure those that support the regime; that alone means something, they emphasized. Closer trade ties now than in previous years forces the GOB to pay attention to other countries' views.

¶4. (C) The youngest member of the group, a woman in her early twenties who took part in the demonstrations, expressed her happiness that the demonstrations allowed her generation to join the pro-democracy movement. She elaborated that the large numbers of young students who marched in the protests gave her hope that the democracy movement in Burma would not

die with those students who led the protests in 1988. Her generation, she noted, could provide new and creative ideas to further their hopes for democracy in Burma.

15. (C) Comment. This group of women writers expressed optimism without fear, a view we have rarely heard since the crackdown in September. While they have high hopes for what the international community has power to do, they also realize that the transition to democracy in Burma is in their hands. End Comment.

VILLAROSA